



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## **QUESTIONS FOR COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES NOMINEE**

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### **COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES (CHRO) (CGS § 46A-52)**

- The commission consists of nine members. The governor appoints five and legislative leaders appoint four (the president pro tempore and minority leader of the Senate and the speaker and minority leader of the House each appoint one).
- Governor's nominees serve five-year terms; other members serve three-year terms.
- The commission oversees the state agency that enforces anti-discrimination laws.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE NOMINEE**

1. What is CHRO's primary mission? Is CHRO primarily a law enforcement agency or is it primarily a civil rights advocacy agency?
2. This session, one of the governor's bills (HB 5016, §§ 74-82) would consolidate CHRO and the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities into a new Department of Human Rights, Protection, and Advocacy. How do you think this proposal would impact CHRO?
3. Given the state's fiscal challenges, what role can a commissioner play to ensure that the investigation process is working as cost effectively as possible and that the commission's resources are being used efficiently?
4. CHRO participates in community forums and informational sessions to inform the public about the commission and provide information about discrimination. What more can the commission do to inform the public about their rights under the state's anti-discrimination laws?
5. What role can a commissioner play to ensure the complaint investigation process is fair and is perceived as being fair and unbiased by complainants and respondents alike?
6. What are your views on affirmative action? Is there any tension between affirmative action and the laws prohibiting employers and others from discriminating against people?
7. How long should it take, on average, to complete an investigation? How many cases are settled?
8. Human rights referees conduct hearings to determine whether discrimination has occurred and have the authority to remedy any discrimination they find. How much control, influence, or authority should the commission have over referees?
9. The number of referees was reduced from five to three effective July 1, 2011. Is there a backlog of cases in light of this reduction? If so, what can be done to eliminate it?

10. What are the most common types of claims in terms of the type of discrimination alleged?
11. Last session, an act passed by the General Assembly (PA 11-55) explicitly added discrimination based on gender identity or expression to the types of discrimination prohibited by state law. Has there been an increase in claims alleging this type of discrimination? What do you think about expanding the classes of people protected under Connecticut law? Do you have any suggestions?
12. Another act passed last year (PA 11-237) made various changes to expedite the processing of cases before CHRO. For example, the act made mediation mandatory for cases retained after the merit assessment review, or reinstated following a legal review by CHRO attorneys. How have the changes impacted CHRO's handling of cases?

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